



Al-Risala 1984

April

Editorial

After their victory in the Crusades, the Muslims were in a position of dominance; but Islam was not able to spread in Europe by virtue of that domination. The bitter memory of their defeat at the hands of the Muslims had made Europeans averse to Islam. The prejudice and antagonism left by the Crusades now blocked the way to the spread of Islam in Europe.

When European nations later emerged as colonial powers, however, this hostility mellowed. The defeat of the Crusade was now avenged. A large portion of the Muslim world came – directly or indirectly – under European rule.

Defeated nations hold grudges against the other party. For this reason they are not willing to accept anything that their rivals have to offer them. Victorious nations, on the other hand, are self-sufficient. No psychological barrier prevents them from accepting anything that the other party has to offer them. With the colonial period, then, came great new opportunities for the spread of Islam in Europe. Preaching Islam in a defeated Europe was a hard task, but preaching it in a victorious Europe was relatively easy.

But now another obstacle came in the way. The resentment that was previously felt by Europeans was now felt by Muslims. In the colonial period, Europe achieved political and cultural ascendancy over the Muslim world. This made Muslims bitterly antagonistic towards Europe; it made Muslims look at Europe as their material enemies and national rivals; it made them view Europeans with hostility instead of sympathy. The result was that the message of Islam could not be communicated to Europeans in the colonial period either. For the word of God to be conveyed to other nations, a preacher/congregation relationship has to exist between Muslims and other people. Such a relationship was never able to develop between Muslims and Europeans, for one reason in the past and for a different reason now.

Now is the time then to end the political and economic rivalry that exists between Muslims and other nations. Only if Muslims cease to think in a worldly way will an atmosphere conducive to proslytization come into existence. What they must do is think on a divine level, for God has entrusted them with the propagation of His word. Only when they do so will they realize the importance of relinquishing the worldly rivalry that exists between them and other nations.

The Message of the Qur'an

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Chapter 2,

As for the deniers, whether you warn them or not, they will not have faith. God has set a seal upon their hearts and ears, and on their eyes there is a covering. A grievous punishment awaits them. VV6-7

If one closes one's eyes, one will not be able to see. If one blocks one's ears, one will not be able to hear. However clear the call of truth may be, it can only be understandable and acceptable if one open one's mind to it. God's inaudible call in the universe, and the audible expression of that call by the preacher of God's word, cannot touch those who have closed minds.

The call to truth is founded on reality; it accords with nature. When it is raised, no one can fail to recognize its truth. If one hears it with an open mind, one will know in one's heart that it is true. But the practical situation is that the centuries-old conventional set-up of the time has taken on a particular form. Some religious and secular posts come to exist within the framework of this setup; certain people occupy these seats. Certain people reach greatness by complying with the concepts of fame and honour prevalent and accepted in the society. Others lead lives of content by attaching themselves to vested interests which are established in the existing set-up.

The preacher of God's word is an unfamiliar figure in this setup. He calls people to the will of God, but people think that to accept his call would mean demolishing the world they have made for themselves. Despite the absolute verity of the message of truth, two things prevent them from understanding it properly: pride and worldliness. In the conventional set-up, certain people have obtained high positions in society. Such people think that by following some "insignificant person" their honour would be endangered. This feeling incites them to arrogance. They look down on the preacher of the truth and disregard his call. Worldly interests also come in the way of accepting the truth, for the preacher of truth is not a representative of the conventional setup. His call is new and unfamiliar. People think that acceptance of his call would be a threat to their material security.

It is these states which prevent people from accepting the truth; the Quran has called them seals over people's hearts. The minds of those who do not consider the true call seriously, who are proud and worldly in their attitude, are covered with an invisible veil which makes their minds impervious to the truth. When one is prejudiced against something, one cannot see its rationality, even if there are clear signs in support of it.

There are some who declare: 'we believe in God and in the last day,' yet they are not true believers. They seek to deceive God and those who believe in Him, but they deceive none save themselves, though

they may not perceive it. There is a sickness in their hearts which God has increased: they shall be sternly punished for their hypocrisy. When it is said to them: Do not commit evil in the land,' they reply: 'We only want to make peace.' Truly, it is they who are the evil-doers, but of this they are not aware. And when it is said to them: 'Believe as others believe,' they reply: 'Are we to believe as fools believe?' Truly it is they who are the fools, if they only knew it! When they meet the faithful, they declare: 'We too are believers.' But when they are alone with their devils they say to them: 'we follow none but you: we were only mocking.' God mocks at them, leaving them to wander blindly on in their contumacy. Such are those that barter away guidance for error: their commerce does not prosper. VV8-16

For those who put worldly interests first, total and unconditional devotion to the truth appears unwise, for their true allegiance is to their worldly interests, and it is only on a superficial level that they can attach themselves to the truth. They consider themselves clever. They think that they are safeguarding themselves in the world, and also qualifying to be considered among the pious. But this is no more than wishful thinking; it is a figment of their imagination rather than a real fact of life. Every test in life removes them further from the way of truth and closer to their selfish ways. Their hypocrisy is like a cancer which grows and grows, they consider the true believer to be destroying themselves, for no good reason, for the sake of truth. They call their own policy, on the other hand, one of reconciliation; for they think it enables them to pursue a safe course without clashing with anyone; but this is just unawareness on their part. If they were to think deeply they would realize that peace on earth can only come from man giving himself up to God alone. Evil, on the other hand, lies in obstructing any movement aimed at consolidating man's relationship with his Lord. Their seemingly profitable trading is in fact running at a loss, for they are forsaking pure truth for an adulterated version of the truth which can benefit no one.

Patience and forbearance in the face of ignorance

Zayd Ibn Sana, a Jewish scholar of Medina who later accepted Islam, says that when he saw the Prophet, he found on his face all the signs of prophethood but one, and that was the unshakable forbearance which a prophet should evince. An excess of ignorance on another's part should only result in an excess of forbearance on his part. Then one day he saw the Prophet coming, and with him Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the fourth Caliph. At this point a man, riding on a camel, came up to them. He looked like a Bedouin. "Prophet of God," he said, "a group of people in our village has accepted Islam. I had told them that if they accepted Islam, they would be provided for in abundance. Now a drought has struck there. I fear that greed will make them forsake Islam, as greed made them adopt it. If you think it a good idea, then send them something to help them out." The Prophet looked towards Ali "There is nothing left to send them," Ali told him. Zayd went up close and said to the Prophet: "If you want, I will give you money in exchange for dates." He agreed, and the scholar gave him 80 mithqals of gold, all of which the Prophet handed over to the Bedouin, saying: "Help your people, and divide it amongst them justly."

Zayd Ibn Sana says that a couple of days before the fixed date for the payment of debt, he found the Prophet sitting with a number of his companions next to a wall. He went up to the Prophet, caught hold of his clothes, and said to him harshly: "Mohammad, why don't you pay me my due? From what I know of the Banu Muttalib they all put off paying their debts." Umer, who was with the Prophet, became very angry on hearing this. "Enemy of God," he said, "is that the way you address the Prophet of God? If it wasn't for the prophet, I swear by God that I would have cut off your head with my sword." But the Prophet kept on looking calmly at Zayd Ibn Sana. Then he addressed Umer: "Umer," he said, "Zayd and I deserved better treatment from you. You should have told me to be better at paying my debts, and him to be better at demanding them. Take him with you, Umer, and pay him his due; in fact, give him 20 sa'as of dates extra, because you have alarmed him with your threats."

6 April 1984

Ray of Hope

The world beyond death is, as Arthur Koestler (1905-1983) put it an “unknown country”. We are all traveling towards that unknown country. The strangest and most mysterious event of our lives is death. Everyone is anxious to know what will become of him after death.

The American evangelist, Billy Graham, has written a book called *The Secret of Happiness*. He writes in this book that he once received an urgent message from a famous political leader, who wanted him to meet him at the earliest opportunity.

When Billy Graham reached the politician's residence, he was ushered into a separate room. There the politician addressed him in a heart-rending tone. “I am an old man,” he said, “life has lost all meaning. I am ready to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?”

It was, indeed, only a man of religion who could give him an answer.

Death is lying in wait for every one. In one's youth one tends to forget death, but in the end the hand of fate holds sway. In old age, when one's strength is on the wane, one realizes the imminence of death; one is moved to wonder that lies in store for one in the hereafter; one searches for a ray of hope which can illuminate the world one will have to face after death.

It is this ray of hope that God's prophets have come to the world to provide. The prophets have taught man that there is another world – one that is both eternal and ideal – after death.

Those who will be admitted to this perfect world in the afterlife are those who, in this life on earth, prove themselves worthy of it by their righteous actions.

This message has been summed in these words of the Quran: “And God calls unto the home of peace.” (Quran, 10:25)

6 April 1984

The best action: heartfelt remembrance of God

Someone told Abu Darda that Abu Saeed Ibn Manba had freed one hundred slaves. "That is all very well," Abu Darda replied, "but would you like me to tell you something that is even better: steadfast faith in God and constant remembrance of Him."

NEEM Nature Speaks

The second International Neem Conference was held in West Germany in December 1983. Over one hundred delegates participated in this conference. The neem tree came into sharp focus in the context of the adverse effects of man-made chemical insecticides. It is a principal source of inexpensive natural repellent and causes no environmental damage.

A noted animal physiologist, Dr. L.M. Schoon Hoven, of the agricultural University at Wageningen in Holland, said that the unique defence system in the neem provided a rare opportunity for insect control. Experiments held in Togo, Africa, had showed that neem leaves, worked into the soil, reduced the population of the plant parasitic nematodes and promoted "spectacular increase" in crop yield.

Now the question arises, what exactly enabled the neem tree to survive, perhaps for millions of years, in a world of greedy insects? And what enabled it to provide protection to the rest of the biological world?

The reason given at the International Neem Conference was that the tree has developed, over the ages, a strong and steady chemical defence system, which enabled it to thwart the heavy election pressure exerted by insects.

According to this explanation, it is a blind evolutionary process which has produced this unique quality in the neem tree. What man could not achieve after a long period of consistent effort, the tree evolved automatically.

Man is an intelligent being, with will power and consciousness of his own; but in spite of this he is finding great difficulty in producing chemical compounds which will kill only harmful insects, without adversely affecting man and other living creatures.

How strange it is then that the neem tree, which is not only ignorant of other living beings, but also unaware of its own problems, has succeeded in developing this defence system for insect control that causes no damage to man or other living creatures.

This fact shows that a more intelligent and Powerful Being exists in the universe. This unique quality of the neem does nothing to prove that everything has developed as a result of a blind evolutionary process. Rather, it serves as an incontrovertible proof of the existence of God; for only All-Knowing and All-Powerful Being could have invested an unknowing plant with such magic and far-seeing properties.

8 April 1984

Wonders of Nature

God send down water from the sky, bringing forth gardens of delight. Try as you may, you cannot cause such trees to grow.

(Qur'an 27: 60)

Trees are vital to the existence of human beings. In a treeless world any form of human or animal life would be well-nigh impossible, quite apart from any consideration of aesthetic appeal. Trees absorb noise, give off precious oxygen, clean the air of pollution, reduce glare, act as coolers and air conditioners and also serve as emotional tranquillizers – trees are vital in any city, howsoever developed it may be.

In hospitals, schools, prisons, and drug rehabilitation centres, it has been found that trees act as a form of therapy, helping to heal mental, physical and social disabilities, where trees have been properly landscaped and planted with an eye to beauty of form, colour and denseness, they can ease stress, contribute to healing and provide an environment where relaxation is possible.

"Plants," says an eminent horticulturist, "are non-threatening and non-discriminating. They respond not to race, intellect, wealth or physical capacity but to the care given to them. Plants ease anxiety and tension, give a sense of tranquility."

Experts tell us that trees can lower blood pressure, change blood sugar levels, bring peace and tranquility to troubled hearts. A beautiful landscape, a wooded park, can do more for the human soul than all the chemical tranquillizers in the world.

Diversion

The world of nature is characterized by its equilibriums. Human society must acquire the same equilibrium if it is to function smoothly.

There are many ways in which God maintains the equilibrium of nature. One of these ways is diversion; that is, the channeling off of a force that has reached excessive proportions. Think of the amount of rain that falls in the rainy season. Immense damage would be done if it were to remain in cultivated and populated areas. So what nature does in such situations is provide the land and human population with an amount of water which is only just adequate while the rest of the water is diverted into rivers.

Man has made use of this principle of diversion in the building of dams. The purpose of a dam is to control the free flow of water in a river. Whenever there appears to be a surplus water, the excess amount is channeled off in another direction. In this way the river is prevented from deluging the surrounding area. This water then flows into a large pool, or reservoir. So it is with many machines. When the amount of steam in a steam-engine, for instance, exceeds specified proportions, then it is diverted and funneled off.

This principle of diversion should also be applied to human society. If one lives with others one is bound to have cause for complaint against them from time to time. These grievances will end in social strife if allowed to escalate. The smooth running of society will then become well nigh impossible.

This strife and conflict can be avoided only if man finds an outlet for his excess emotion. This is the function that faith in God and the hereafter performs.

The prophet Joseph had been separated from his father by his half-brothers; later on the same thing happened to Joseph's full-brother, Benjamin. It was quite natural that Joseph's father should have been thrown into a profound emotional crisis by these events. If he had made Joseph's half-brothers the target of his emotions, then his family would have been beset by savage strife. So instead of this, he turned the flood of his emotions towards God. "I address my sorrow and sadness to God alone," he said (Quran, 12:85). A similar incident occurred during the caliphate of Umer. The Caliph dismissed the commander of the Muslim army, Khalid Ibn Walid. This was a severe blow to a man of Khalid's standing. But he diverted all his emotions towards God. He reacted to the Caliph's decision with these words:

I do not fight for the cause of Umer

I fight for the cause of the Lord of Umer.

Human society is deeply indebted to faith in the hereafter for this function that it performs. Faith in God enables one to turn to Him for recompense in times of grievance. A man of God does not make others the target of his negative feelings. Instead, he diverts them towards God. The deluge of his emotions, which might have caused immense damage to human beings, falls instead into a diversion pool.

10 April 1984

Hastening to Prayer in Times of Difficulty

Huzaifa recalls, "We were three hundred strong at the Battle of the Trench (627 A.D.). It was a very difficult night: Abu Sufyan and his army were on one side of Medina and the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza on the other. We thought our families were in danger. The weather was very cold, and soon a strong wind arose, accompanied by thunder and lightning. Stones were crashing on all sides. It was so dark that nothing could be seen. At this time the Prophet told me to go to the enemy and see what they were up to – whether they were planning to retreat, or persevere with the siege. Despite feeling cold and scared, I arose at the Prophet's command. He prayed that God should protect me, and I set off on my journey. I mixed with Abu Sufyan's soldiers and heard them talking about retreat. When I brought the news back to the Prophet, I found him covered in a sheet, praying. Whenever the Prophet was confronted with a grave situation, he would pray."

10 April 1984

Letting one's heart be moved by the Quran

Abu Hamza told Shuaba that he had once said to Abdullah Ibn Abbas that he was in the habit of reading the Quran very fast-sometimes he would even read the whole Quran in one night. "I prefer to just recite one chapter", Ibn Abbas told him. "If you wish to recite the Quran, then recite it in such a way that you can hear and understand it. When you read the Quran, pause to marvel at it, and let your hearts be moved by it. And do not make it your intent just to reach the end of the chapter."

Why be on the Defensive?

Communist China has recently been facing a new kind of solution – spiritual pollution, following upon the all too familiar industrial pollution.

Following the Sino-American pact made during Richard Nixon's presidency China adopted an open door policy towards the West. This resulted in an influx of unwelcome liberal values and religious ideas into the country. The entry of greater number of people, and an increase in books and journals coming in from the West, represented a kind of cultural invasion, the ideas of which ran counter to the official ideology of Red China. Ideological crusades were launched in China to resist this invasion. As a result, many people have been arrested and the publication of suspect articles in Chinese newspapers has been banned. A recent example of the rigid censorship that has been enforced was the closure, in September 1983 of a Jean-Paul Sartre play in Shanghai. Sartre's writings were criticized last year for having a negative impact on Chinese youth.

The government is making tremendous efforts to encounter this "spiritual pollution". Communist party officials have realized that this pollution has entered China because of its opening to the West in recent years. The head of the communist party's propaganda unit, Mr. Deng Liqun, has defined spiritual pollution to include "articles and speeches, which criticize or question Marxism and Socialism."

The communists hold that their ideology is supreme. As they see it, man has finally, after a long ideological search, discovered ultimate truth in the form of communist philosophy. If this is the case, then why is the communist world afraid of non-communist ideas? Why should truth feel insecure in its encounter with untruth? Why should a superior ideology have cause for alarm in face of inferior ideologies?

Darkness can never be afraid of light. When darkness and light come together, the one of flee will certainly be darkness, even if it calls itself light.

Big Bang Theory

E.O. Wilson, the inventor of socio-biology, once said in an interview that the Big Bang theory is more interesting than any religious theory regarding origin of the universe. In fact the Big Bang theory is clearly mentioned in the following verse of the Quran:

"Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were one solid mass which we tore asunder, and that we have made every living thing of water? Will they not have faith?
21:30

The Quran is here addressing all mankind. It is speaking beyond the level of time to all unbelievers; it is telling them that there is proof of the existence of One God in the universe before their eyes. Why then do they deny it?

In 1912, the American astronomer Vesto Melvin Slipher discovered from his observation of the stars from low Well Observatory in America that some constellations were rapidly moving outwards. This theory was later confirmed by Edwin Hubble and Milton Humanson. In fact, their observations through the 100 inch telescope at Mount Wilson showed that all constellations were moving in an outward direction. The Dutch astronomer, Willem de Sitter later accumulated further evidence in support of this theory. Then in 1965, New Jersey scientists Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson discovered some radiation emitted by the explosion that marked the origin of the universe. So much evidence has accumulated in support of the Big Bang Theory that it has now come to be regarded as an established fact.

This theory implies that the universe is not infinite; it has a definite beginning. It shows that we live in an expanding universe. On all sides of us constellations are careering outwards at a stupendous pace. It has been calculated that if this outward movement were to be reversed, it would take 20,000 million years for the whole strung out universe to converge into one mass. This theory has proved the existence of God from the law of nature, for only an external agent could have made a solid mass move in an outward direction at a specific time.

The more science advances, the closer it comes to the Quran. One is compelled to agree with what Dr. Maurice Bucaille writes in the following paragraphs of his book, *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*:

"In view of the level of knowledge in Muhammad's day it is inconceivable that many of the statements in the Quran which are connected with science could have been the work of a man. It is moreover, perfectly legitimate, not only to regard the Quran as the expression of a Revelation, but also to award it a very special place, on account of the guarantee of authenticity it provides and the presence in it of scientific statement which, when studied today, appear as a challenge to explanation in human terms."

13 April 1984

All Praise is Due to God

A tree is unaware of its own extraordinary significance. A flower does not realize what a delicate and exquisite masterpiece it really is. A bird is oblivious to its own breath taking beauty. Though all things in this world are classic specimens of the most exquisite art, they never come to know themselves as such.

For whom then, is this beautiful and gracious display? It is all for men's benefit. Man is the only being in the known universe who can perceive beauty in a thing and appreciate its excellence. God has created an exquisite work of art in worldly form and enabled man to apprehend it. He has given man a tongue to express his wonder and veneration at God's stupendous feats of creation. This is praise, or admiration of God. Praise is a tribute of the most sublime sentiments, cast into human words to be offered before God.

Praise is to be moved at the sight of God's craftsmanship and to spontaneously express one's realization of His perfection in words to this effect. "God, all praise is due to You. You are chaste and exalted. God, count me among the believers, and raise me not up blind like those who failed to acknowledge Your perfection or perceive Your beauty." Praise is constant remembrance of God in this manner, in Arabic or any other language.

The Opportunities Awaiting Us

In 1981, when Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, the great champion of Pan-Islamism, was in Istanbul, the Japanese Emperor Magi sent a letter to the King of Turkey, Abdul Hamid II. Expressing his friendship he wrote:

"We are both Eastern rulers. It is in our interests that we should be familiar with and have closer contacts with one another. There should develop between us a strong bond so that we can defend ourselves against nations and empires; for they see us all in one light. I have noticed that Western nations send their missionaries to our country, for there is religious freedom here; but I have not noticed you doing the same. I would like you to send missionaries to Japan to preach Islam here. Perhaps in this way a stronger, meaningful relationship can be established between us."

(Jamaluddin Afghani by Mahmood Aburia)

On receiving this letter, King Abdul Hamid gathered several Islamic scholars, including Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, and showed the letter to them. But no one showed any particular interest in taking up the Japanese Emperor's offer. The official envoy who had brought the letter returned with a mere formal note of thanks.

At this time, Syed Jamaluddin and other Muslim leaders were engaged in meaningless and fruitless political conflict with their adversaries. It was a time of great activity in the Islamic world. On all sides, Islamic movements were arising. These movements, though seemingly different, had two basic things in common: they were all essentially political in their nature, being reactions against the long period of colonial domination; they all failed in achieving their objectives,

This letter from Emperor Magi, however, shows that had Muslims cared to make constructive efforts toward preaching the word of Islam, instead of engaging in fruitless conflict, their aims would have been better served.

It is highly regrettable that open invitations to preach Islam go unheeded, or are met with apathy. We need to shake ourselves out of our lethargy, and go out with energy and enthusiasm to preach the word of God.

ISLAM and the Problems of Contemporary Man

The teachings of Islam can broadly be divided into two parts. The first part consists of man's relationship with God, and the second concerns man's relationship with man. The term *ibadah* (worship) covers the teachings of the first category and the term *Mu'amalat*, or human affairs, covers the teachings of the second category.

The teachings of Islam pertaining to worship are unchangeable. To add to them or detract from them in any way would amount to *bida'a*, or innovation, a term which applies only to matters of worship.

Commandments regarding man's dealings with his fellow men are not immutable in this way. Here we have been provided only with the basics, and we are free to apply them to changing circumstances at all times. Independent judgement can only be exercised in this second category; it is only means of such independent judgement, or *ijtihad*, that the basic teachings of Islam can be applied to the changing face of the world.

The difference between the two types of teaching is clear from *Hadith*. On the one hand the Prophet said, "Anything invented by anyone in this religion which is not a part of it should be rejected." This statement refers to matters of worship. On the other hand, the Prophet's conversation with Mu'az ibn Jabal, when he was being dispatched to Yemen to takeover as governor of that province, shows the different nature of the second type of commandments. The Prophet questioned his companion before his departure: "How," he asked "will you judge matters?" "With the help of the Qur'an," Mu'az replied. The Prophet then went on to ask what he would do if he did not find the guidelines in the Qur'an. Mu'az said that he would have recourse to the *Sunnah*, or practice of the Prophet. "And what," the Prophet asked "if you do not find the necessary guidelines in the *Sunnah*?" "Then," said Mu'az, "I will exercise my own judgement to the best of my ability." The Prophet expressed his and God's approval of Mu'az's Policy, and thanked God for granting his companion sound judgement.

Note: This paper was presented to the Second Caribbean Islamic Conference, Barbados (March 31_April 4, 1983).

These two examples from *Hadith* show that there is no *ijtihad* in matters of worship. As far as worldly affairs are concerned, however, the right of independent judgement shall always be valid. This is clear from the Prophet's comment on the verse of the Qur'an which enjoins the believers to "muster against them all the force at (their) disposal" (8:60). The meaning of 'force', the Prophet said, "is shooting arrows". One and a half thousand years ago, the bow and arrow were considered a powerful military weapon. That is why the Prophet explained the verse in this manner. Now time has changed. Now the word 'force' will be taken as referring to those weapons which possess an effective military capacity

today. The Prophet's statement was only a timely commentary on the verse of the Qur'an to which he was referring. This shows that as far as worldly affairs are concerned, the basic teachings can be found in the Qur'an; but one is free to exercise independent judgement in their application.

In this paper, I will deal only with the second category of Islamic commandments. This category can be subdivided into two parts: the first concerns the basic approach of Islam towards human affairs and the second is related to the legal framework which the Islamic *Shariat* offers for solving the problems of man. Here I will confine myself to the first aspect of the topic.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

The Qur'an states: "Had the truth followed their desires, the heavens, the earth, and all who dwell in them, would have surely been corrupted" (23:71). God's scheme of creation is a perfect one. The whole universe, except man, is following this divine scheme. That is why; as the Qur'an points out that the universe is faultless (67:3). But man is free to act as he likes. He follows his desires and forsakes the true path. The result is corruption and disorder in the human world. Man's perversion is the price of his freedom.

The Islamic solution to the problems of man is the same as that which has been ordained for the rest of the universe. If man follows the path of truth, like the universe, he can produce the same spirit of peace and harmony which the cosmos already displays. The path of truth as opposed to the path of man's desire can be understood from this verse in the Qur'an: "The sun is not allowed to overtake the moon nor does the night outpace the day. Each runs in its own orbit" (36: 40). It is God's will that everything should move in its own orbit. All astronomical bodies act accordingly, never clashing with one another on their course. If man were to apply this principle to his life, everyone would operate in his own given sphere, thus rectifying the friction which exists in human society. On the other hand, if he follows his own desires, he comes into conflict with his fellow men which causes trouble in the domestic and international arenas.

UNIVERSAL NORMS

The laws which man must follow, if he is to succeed in this world and the next are the same as those which are applied to the rest of the world. The difference is that man adopts these laws of his own free will, whereas they have been forced upon the rest of the universe.

The Quran Says:

"Give just weight and measure and do not defraud others of their possessions. Do not corrupt the land after it has been set in order. That is best for you, if you are true believers (7:85).

According to this verse, the world made by God is a perfect world, where everything is set in order. Everything in it functions as it ought to. This disciplined system provides a model for man. He should

follow the pattern of nature in all his actions. Only then can he establish a just and peaceful society. His refusal to follow nature's pattern results in a corrupt society, and a degeneration of a previously orderly system.

The secret of our success on earth lies in our ability to act in accordance with nature. Man has shown great prowess in his ability to exploit nature for technological and scientific ends; yet he has not put the simple lesson of nature to work in his life. An understanding of nature, and harmony with the world around us, has had startling effects on human progress in the material world. This success has not been repeated in the human world because man has not applied the laws of nature to his own life. Just as harmony with nature is the key to material advance so it is the key to the reform and well-being of the human soul. Islam, one might say, is an ethical application to human society of the same divine norms which are observed by the rest of the world as natural laws.

Man's deviation from universal norms can be illustrated by an example. When the U.S. gained its independence from foreign political domination, a newly liberated American is said to have gone out to celebrate his freedom in his own way. He strutted exuberantly down the street, swinging his arms in a carefree manner, and ignoring other pedestrians. Eventually he hit a passerby on the nose.

The passer-by was enraged and said: "What is this foolhardiness? What makes you walk in this frivolous manner, swinging your hands about in this way?" "America is free," the man replied. I'm free to do what I want and walk as I wish. "Well", replied the passer-by, "your freedom ends where my nose begins."

The passerby's response was, in fact, the voice of man's true nature, calling out for the establishment in human society of the universal norms. All astronomical bodies revolve in their own orbit. No star or planet leaves its orbit to enter another. As a result the vast order of the universe has functioned without deviation for billions of years. This is the law of nature. Man instinctively wishes to be guided by this universal law. The American passerby's response was an expression of this desire.

In a world which has been forcefully subjugated to the will of God, only man has a will of his own. The problems which he encounters in life are in fact the price that he has to pay for his freedom. The entire universe conforms to the will of God, and functions in a system of exemplary harmony. Man, however, misuses his freedom and strays from the path that God has laid down for him. All his problems can be traced to this fundamental deviation.

There are multiple problems facing man today: the nuclear arms race, the danger of a third world war and the inevitable holocaust that would ensue the economic recession which has led to unprecedented unemployment in the industrial countries, inflation, crises in industrial relations, exploitation of backward countries by technologically advanced nations, and pollution to name just a few. All these problems can be traced to one fundamental source: man's misuse of his freedom. Man does not keep to his own sphere; he does not restrict his freedom to the area which has been allotted to him. He continually infringes upon the domain of others; he is not ready to confine himself to the sphere where the 'nose' of the other begins.

THE LAW OF GOD

The Qur'an states that "God created everything, and He has set for each a measure" (25: 2). This principle is startlingly clear in the world of physics, where research has shown everything in this universe to be governed by laws, which every element adheres to with strict determinism. Physicists marvel at the uniformity of the universe.

Man, however, fails to fit in to this scheme exactly as the universe. This is because man is free to act according to his choice, whereas the universe follows a set course. The Qur'an exhorts man to adopt that course for himself.

"Do they seek a religion other than God's, when everything in heaven and earth has submitted to Him, willingly or by compulsion? To Him they shall all return." (3: 83).

In another place the Qur'an says:

"God has forced the sun and the moon into His service, each pursuing an appointed course. He ordains all things. He makes plain His revelations so that you may firmly believe in meeting your Lord." (13: 2).

The words, "God ordains all things" refer to the cosmic order. "God makes plain His revelations" refers to the word of God as revealed to his prophets. The laws which are directly imposed by God on the rest of the world are revealed to man through prophets to be implemented by man of his own free will. It is as if the book of God is the literal statement of the divine principle of which the universe is a practical demonstration. Man is obliged to subordinate his own will to the will of God's; he is expected to forsake his own power for the sake of God. In this task he must apply the cosmic order to his own life, and follow the path which the prophets trod. Only then will "God's will be done on earth, as it is in heaven".

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) has rightly said that this world is extremely beautiful. There is only one thing in it which is not beautiful and that is man. In a world where nothing bears enmity against any other thing, man becomes the enemy of man. In a world where rains come in order that crops may grow, man destroys them by fire. In a world where harmony is in evidence in all things, man wreaks havoc.

The only way that man can mend the havoc that he has caused on earth is by following the pattern which the rest of the universe adheres to. The forcible subjugation of the universe to the will of God means that man has a model on which to base his life. He also has access to the word of God, which enables him to interpret the message of the universe in a realistic and practical manner. If however, he chooses to follow his desires and forsakes the divinely inspired pattern which the rest of the universe follows absolutely, then he can expect only a world torn by strife and trouble followed by an eternity of despair and remorse.

MAN AND NATURE

Science is really just an implementation of the laws of nature. Just as science bends matter to the ends of civilization, so religion provides the means of converting human life into an ideal human society. In this respect one can rightly say that religion, by which we mean Islam, is the science of life. For the rest of the material world this science functions according to the immutable laws of nature, while man adopts this law of nature by his own choice.

There is a branch of science called 'bionics' which seeks to understand how nature functions and produces nature's pattern in mechanical form. It is an important subject in that it reflects the ability of science to copy nature: boats are a copy of fish; aeroplanes of birds, cameras are a mechanical reproduction of the function of the eye; computers are an imitation of human brain, and so on. We use the models provided by nature in our mechanical world with great success. The message of Islam is that the same model of nature should be applied to our own lives and society. The science of the universe which shows us how we should construct the individual as well as the society. In fact, all the necessary models for the organization of human life are available in the universe. But man has been allowed to run loose in this world if he wants. He is not forced to apply the message of nature to his life. He is being tested as to whether he uses his freedom to good or bad ends.

The models which nature provides us with are symbolic. Man must see them in the light of divine revelation if he is to interpret them as they should be interpreted. This in itself is a great challenge to man. He must look at the world around him in its real light. He must show that he can hear the silent message of the Creator of the universe, and can put the hints of nature into words. If he understands this model of nature correctly, then he can implement it in his life. Man has to do voluntarily what other things do involuntarily.

NATURE'S MODELS

Let us take a look at some of the models of nature.

1. I mentioned the movement of innumerable astronomical bodies earlier. They all move strictly in their orbits without encroaching on one another; they never clash, for they never exceed their limits. The astronomers tell us that sometimes a whole galaxy consisting of billions of stars moves through another galaxy without any clash between the two.

This model shows man how he should continue on life's journey without clashing with the interests of anyone else. A nation – a galaxy of people – should be able to come into contact with another nation without a clash of interests.

2. Bee-hives serve as another model. Bee-hives have a highly organized infrastructure. The system of this state functions under a queen-bee. All other bees carry out their duties efficiently and diligently. Highly result-oriented activities go on inside the bee-hive day and night.

Human society should be organized in the same manner. All human beings should follow one system. Everyone, both on an individual and a community level, should obediently fulfill their duties to one God.

3. The trees provide us with another model. Man breathes. With every breath he inhales oxygen and exhales carbon dioxide. Trees, on the contrary, inhale carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen. This process preserves the right environmental balance. This model is also applicable to human life. One should be forgiving towards those who wrong him. One should return sweet words for bitter ones. One should not react negatively to the bad behaviour of others.

DIVINE CHARACTERISTICS

The Prophet provided us with the most perfect example of the divine characteristics which he exhorted us to adopt. He is reported as saying, "My lord has commanded me to offer friendship in face of enmity, to give those who deprive me, and forgive those who oppress me". It takes an effort on the part of man to assume the 'divine characteristics' which are displayed in the rest of the world and which the Prophet practiced so perfectly. The Islamic life is to follow the cosmic and prophetic patterns. In it lies the solution to all the problems of man. The meaning and wisdom which are made manifest in the wider universe under the direct control of God, have to be adopted by man in his personal life of his own accord. What God has established in the rest of the world on a material plane, man has to establish on a human plane.

What is found in the form of iron on a cosmic level is required of man in the form of strong character. On a cosmic level springs gush forth from rocks; this action is required of man in the form of kind-heartedness. Fragrance and colour are found aplenty in the cosmos; man should beautify his life by being fair and honest in his dealings. Trees breathe in polluted air, carbon dioxide, and breathe out oxygen, in return; man should learn from this to adopt the habit of being kind to those who wrong him. Nothing in the cosmos ever encroaches upon other objects. Everything concentrates solely on playing its part in the order of the universe. Man is also required to engage in the same positive struggle, which involves avoiding all negative activities. The principle of recycling and decomposing is at work in the cosmos. Refuse is converted into gas in order to be reused. Leaves fall from trees and turn into humus, which benefits the land. This is required of man in the sense that whatever he spends must be of use to others; his struggle should bear fruit for others. Innumerable activities are going on in the cosmos on a grand scale without recompense. The same thing is required for man; he should keep fulfilling his duties without expecting any recompense in this world for his deeds. Lofty mountains, trees and other such things cast their shadows on the earth. Man should emulate their act and be humble. No one should be

proud; no one should consider himself superior to others. Man should emulate their act and be humble. As the Prophet has enjoined, no one should be proud; no one should consider himself superior to others.

The cosmos is entirely predictable because the events in this cosmos are governed by immutable laws. Everything in the universe functions with such precision that every event can be predicted. God has thus provided in the cosmos a model of predictable character.

Man should follow the cosmic pattern of predictability. This must be an essential element in his character. If you have to criticize someone you should be able to predict that he will take your criticism seriously and that his reaction will not be negative. If someone makes a promise, it should be certain that he will fulfill it, etc... Thus, one must possess a character which could be forecast.

CONCLUSION

I hope that it has become clear from the above discussion that the solution to the problems of humanity is the same as the solution which has been applied so successfully to the rest of the world. The rest of the world is a living proof of the fact that wherever the principles which guide the universe are applied, peace and harmony prevail. Man can perfect his own society only by applying these universal norms to his own life. God imposed these norms on the rest of the world but he allowed man to deviate from them. For He wishes to grant man the credit of having chosen for himself the path which the rest of the world is forced to follow. Man's action by choice is the price he has to pay for heaven. To prove himself worthy of heaven man has to be tested in this world, and he cannot be tested if he is not free to act as he chooses.

The coming world of God (heaven) will be inhabited by those who impose the same 'truth' by themselves which is now imposed on the rest of the world by God. Paradise is just a perfect world to be occupied by those who prove themselves to be self-disciplined. Observance of discipline makes one predictable and predictable character alone can entitle one to enter paradise.

23 April 1984

The Pharaoh of Moses

"But We will this day deliver you with your body so that you may be a sign to those after you. And most surely the majority of the people are heedless to Our communications" (10:92).

This passage from the Quran has reference to the death of Pharaoh near the Red Sea, while in pursuit of Moses and the Israelites, and states that his body was not lost in the sea, but cast ashore, and afterwards embalmed and that this should, in due course be made known to generations to come.

The Bible makes no mention of it, nor do we find anything about it in any book of history. Recently, however, among the mummies in Egypt the body of Ramses II, who has been identified with the Pharaoh of Moses, has been discovered.

Those who seek among modern data for proof of the veracity of the Holy Scriptures will find a magnificent illustration of the above verses of the Quran dealing with the Pharaoh's body by visiting the Royal Mummies Room of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

24 April 1984

International Award for Paighambar-e-Inquilab

Pak award for Indian Scholar

NEW DELHI. Dec. 20 - Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Islamic Centre president and editor of Urdu monthly "Al-Risala", has won an award from Pakistan for his book "Paighambar-e-Inqilab"

President Zia-ul-Huq announced the award on the occasion of Id-e-Milad-un-Nabi for the best book on the life of Prophet Mohammad.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES DECEMBER 21 1983

The President of the Islamic Centre, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, has been given an award for his book in Urdu, *Paighambar-e-Inquilab*, in the International *Seerat* Contest held in Pakistan to commemorate the birth of the Prophet of Islam. The announcement was made in a special Radio Pakistan bulletin, broadcast on the occasion of *Id Miladun Nabi*, later relayed by All India Radio.

In this contest there were one hundred and fourteen entries in ten languages, from all over the world.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's works have already been widely hailed internationally. One of his books, *Al-Islam Yatahadda (Mazhab Aur Jadeed Challenge)*, is a set study in several Arab universities, including the Al-Azhar University of Cairo.

The book for which the Maulana received this award, *Paighambar-e-Inquilab*, is a study of the life of the Prophet Mohammad (may peace be upon him). But it does more than chronicle the events of the Prophet's life. It presents his mission as a movement of enormous vitality, which serves as a pattern for all to follow. It explains how the Prophet scrupulously avoided all unconnected issues, and concentrated solely on his basic mission-preaching the word of God. It illustrates how he was moved, not by a spirit of vengeance, but by a deep longing to save his fellow-men from doom in the world to come. It shows, moreover, how the revolution in human thought which the Prophet brought about can be repeated in the present day.

The life of the Prophet is a model on which we should base our lives and our struggle for the faith. We hope that the recognition granted to Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's study will serve to increase popular awareness of the realities of that exemplary life.